



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CHICAGO LABOR IN POLITICS 1877-96¹

I

Labor has its *modus operandi* for every phase of the business cycle. When depression first turns to prosperity, labor demands a shorter day. When work is irregular it is willing to work long hours on the day when work presents itself, but when work becomes a daily routine it wants the day reduced. Steady work, however, swells business prosperity, which is already swelling even more in that it gives labor a larger total income than it had before, which income it carries to market in the form of demand for goods which it previously wanted but could not have. But the demand which it carries to market is so large, as compared with the demand that is already there, that it creates a relative scarcity in the goods it wants and thus sends prices beyond its own reach. It now turns from the demand for shorter hours to a demand for higher wages to meet the higher prices. This demand it continues as prices continue to soar until finally it recognizes the dilemma of catching up with prices which it itself, in part at least, advances with each increase in purchasing power which it secures, at times only at the end of costly strikes. Once it recognizes this dilemma, it goes into politics to curb that element in the community which in the meantime has been profiting from the upward changing prices. Here it demands banking reform, anti-monopoly legislation, government control or regulation of railroad and other public utilities, land reform, new taxes. But it is only the leadership that goes into politics at this point—that is, at the crest of the business cycle. The rank and file still have steady employment and are willing to let well enough alone. When the cycle

¹ This is one chapter of a study of about 350 pages covering the various phases of the history of labor in Chicago since 1870. The study was begun at the University of Illinois under Professor E. L. Bogart and carried to partial completion at the University of Chicago under the friendly advice and encouragement of Professor H. A. Millis.

finally takes its downward course and the factories are closed for part time or altogether, they too begin to view politics with favor and now put content into the erstwhile empty aspirations of their leaders. Alongside of politics, labor carries an economic program for the contingencies of depression. When prosperity first turns into depression, it defends the wages it earned during prosperity. If the depression continues, it demands shorter hours, but this time not for leisure but for the purpose of spreading the available work over a larger number of workers.

This is the ordinary circuit that labor travels. Sometimes it takes on additional luggage. In times of prosperity it will take on consumers' co-operation to reduce the cost of living to the extent of the middleman's profit; in time of depression it will take on producers' co-operation to give some of the unemployed employment.

At the present time labor is going into consumers' co-operation and politics. On the question of co-operation it is generally united. Even the socialists are not objecting, but on the contrary are supporting it. On the question of politics just the opposite is true. The chief reason for variance there is the belief that labor has not accomplished anything through its own efforts in the past and is not likely to in the future. But the evidence forthcoming on the past is so meager that it is very difficult to say just exactly *why* labor has failed in the past. For the same reason it is also uncertain whether the failures of the past are bound to perpetuate themselves. Prior to the panic and depression of 1893 it was thought that trade unionism would never thrive in this country, and history was drawn on for proof. It was shown how every period of depression destroyed the trade-union movement built up in the preceding period of prosperity. Finally the industrial collapse of the nineties came along. It failed to destroy the organizations started in the preceding decade and no one has speculated on the future of trade unionism since. It is not enough to point to past failures; the circumstances of the past failures must be shown. In the hope of indicating some of these a review of the past political performances of Chicago labor is here presented.

II

On four previous occasions Chicago labor has gone into politics—once in 1877, once in 1882, again in 1886, and finally in 1893. The socialists, of course, have been in politics ever since 1874, with some interruptions in the eighties when the anarchists controlled the radical labor elements of the city. But their efforts will not be considered here, except as they joined in the orthodox efforts of the other workers.

III

The first attempt was steeped in greenbackism. Greenbackism, it will be recalled, grew out of Civil War finances. The government paid part of the expense of the war with greenback paper dollars. When the war was over it began to retire them from circulation; but as they were being retired, prices which were already falling fell still faster, and war-time prosperity, which was already declining, declined still faster. A cry went up against their retirement and the government ceased to retire them in 1868. Prices recovered soon thereafter and with them prosperity, which lasted with some ebb and flow until 1873. When the panic descended, the government tried to bolster prosperity by reissuing some twenty-six million dollars in greenbacks previously cancelled. But in 1875 an act was passed providing for the resumption of specie payments on January 1, 1879, with the proviso that some three hundred million dollars, subsequently raised to three hundred and forty-six million and a fraction, remain outstanding.

The growth and decline of prosperity, coming as it did close upon the increase and decrease of the number of greenbacks, aligned the workingmen on the side of paper money. The leaders, however, went farther and worked out a "people's monetary system" based on the country's bonded war debt and the greenbacks. In a sentence, the bondholders were to be given the right to exchange their bonds for greenbacks; and when they no longer needed them, or the market rate of money fell below the interest rate on bonds, they were to be given the right to convert them into bonds again. Andrew C. Cameron, of Chicago, a printer by trade and editor of the *Workingman's Advocate*, was the official interpreter of the

scheme. He presented it to the workingmen in 1867, but, as business recovered in the following year, it came to naught for the time being.

It was not until after the panic of 1873 descended that it became a living issue. But then it was the farmers who first gave expression to it and under a slightly different form. With them the greenback was not to be the basis of a new monetary system but simply a means of supplementing the old. As the depression continued, the workers began to view it in the same light for practical purposes. In 1875 announcements of meetings of persons "in favor of a greenback currency" began to appear in the Chicago papers.¹ In the following year a central club announced that "the Independent Greenback party will enter the field in the forthcoming municipal contest with a full city ticket composed of candidates possessed of distinct integrity, unquestionable honesty, and acknowledged ability."² A short time later the Workingmen's League of Illinois, subsequently changed to the Chicago Labor League, was launched to rally the workers for greenbackism. It was to be made up of delegates "from trade, labor, and ward organizations," and its object was to bring the various workingmen elements "into close communion with each other; to disseminate information among them; to protect them from discriminating and unjust legislation; to ascertain and make known the views of candidates for office on questions of interest to its members; to cement brotherly feeling among those laboring for wages and their employers; and to scrutinize and discuss all matters affecting the conditions of the laborer."³ At one time the league was said to have had forty-two labor organizations in its membership;⁴ but that did not seem to have helped the greenback cause, for Peter Cooper, the greenback candidate for president of the United States, received some 276 votes in Cook County in the same year in which the league was organized.⁵

¹ *Chicago Post and Mail*, October 6, 1875.

² *Chicago Tribune*, March 17, 1876.

³ *Workingman's Advocate* (Chicago), April 22, 1876.

⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1877.

⁵ *Pomeroy's Democrat* (Chicago), November 11, 1876.

The situation changed in the summer of 1877. The depression which the panic of 1873 had induced was approaching its worst stages. Unemployment was widespread, and wages had been cut all along the line.¹ When the railroads announced another cut after several cuts had already been made, the workingmen broke into rioting. On the night of July 23, the switchmen on the Michigan Central struck. On the following day, they marched on the various depots and freight houses in the city and got the men there to join them. After blocking the transportation system, they marched on the manufacturing centers of the city and closed lumber-yards, brickyards, foundries, shoe factories, and the stockyards. They met with no resistance and so continued their operations for two days longer. The third day, however, brought a catastrophic end. United States veteran soldiers, state troops, letter carriers, city police, and private police were put into action. These fought on one side and the workers on the other. Allan Pinkerton, whose special police participated in this event, later stated that nineteen persons were known to have been killed and over a hundred wounded.²

The effect on the workers was immediate. On August 23, the Labor League mentioned above held an open-air meeting, repudiated the Democratic and Republican parties, and voted to go into politics for itself. It adopted a platform calling for repeal of the resumption act of January 14, 1875, remonetization and free coinage of the silver dollar, the perpetuation of Treasury notes as legal tender, and several other reforms and improvements circulating at the time. The platform also contained a number of labor planks: an eight-hour day, arbitration of industrial disputes, abolition of contract convict labor, prohibition of child labor under twelve years of age, enactment of a law compelling employers to pay the wages earned in a certain month not later than the fifteenth of the succeeding month, the establishment of state and national bureaus of labor.³ Some time later the league changed its name to Workingmen's Industrial party of the United States.

¹ House Report of Special Committee on Labor (Illinois), 1879.

² Allan Pinkerton, *Strikers, Communists, Tramps, and Detectives* (New York, 1882), p. 404.

³ *Chicago Tribune*, August 24, 1877.

But the appearance of the Industrial party was an invitation to other groups to try their hands at politics. The socialists had a party of their own since 1874, but were uncertain as to the value of holding office under the existing régime and so at times kept out of elections. After the riots they were no longer in doubt and became a factor in campaigns. The Independent Greenback party, after the Chicago Labor League had changed into the Workingmen's Industrial party, made an abortive attempt, together with disgruntled Democrats who had subscribed to greenbackism,¹ to organize the Independent party of Cook County based on the "co-operation of all classes of citizens, irrespective of past party ties and affiliations."² A. C. Cameron and William McNally, a Democratic politician, were leaders of this coup. Meanwhile another set of workingmen organized the National Workingmen's Organization of Illinois. This was to be a non-partisan organization. Its purpose was not to put a ticket in the field, "but to bond the workingmen together for the support of the best men who would be nominated by either of the two great parties."³ Later on it appeared that Republican politicians were welcome guests at its meetings.⁴ All told, five different elements were now bidding for the labor vote: there were the disgruntled Democrats who had subscribed to greenbackism; there were the doctrinaire greenbackers counting in their midst such brainworkers as J. A. Noonan, editor of the *Industrial Age*, M. M. Pomeroy, editor of *Pomeroy's Democrat*, S. F. Morton, editor of *The Telegraph*, "Dr." Taylor, "Judge" Layton, "Colonel" Ricaby, "Professor" Corcoran, "Professor" Jackson; there were the Industrials who apparently were the manual workers; there were the non-partisan workingmen with the Republican bias; and finally the socialists.

Now began the coalitions and disaffections which have brought so many labor parties to ruin. At first the Socialist party and the Industrial party tried to "capture" one another. They held joint committee meetings, but could not come to an agreement. The Socialists looked upon the Industrials as renegade old-party

¹ *Pomeroy's Democrat*, April 7, 1877.

³ *Ibid.*, September 12, 1877.

² *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1877.

⁴ *Ibid.*, October 14, 1877.

politicians; moreover, greenbackism concerned itself only with the medium of exchange and did not strike the root of the industrial problem. The Industrials looked upon the Socialists as dreamers and would not, as one who objected to union put it, unite with what he must term "a rabble." Then came the Cameron-McNally stroke in the attempt to organize the Independent party of Cook County as a rallying ground for all citizens "irrespective of past party ties and affiliations." The Industrials were invited to come to the initial meeting. Cameron read an address that pictured the distress of the times and proposed a program which did not differ from the program of the Industrials, so far as the greenback issue was concerned, but contained no labor planks. When a vote on the address and program was called, the hall broke into confusion. The chairman, however, on a viva voce vote declared the address and program adopted and, together with Cameron and others, left the hall. The Industrials remained, reorganized the meeting and adopted their own program instead. Cameron came back and pleaded with the workingmen that he was the author of the greenback principles, but the workingmen remained resolute.¹

Finally the Democrats came to stir the already troubled waters. Out of thirteen county offices to be filled in the approaching election, they offered the Industrials the nomination of seven, but mostly the minor offices. When the question of accepting the offer came up, Thomas Kavanaugh, the spokesman of the Industrials, objected only on the ground that the Democrats retained the big jobs for themselves. John McGilvary, another prominent figure, opposed the whole deal. He "hoped the Workingmen's party would do something for humanity." The offer was rejected by 26 votes as against 19.² But when the Industrials actually met to nominate a ticket, the gullible were strong enough to carry out the design of the Democrats and nominated a Democratic ticket, the only Industrials given place on it being Kavanaugh and McGilvary. On the following day the Democrats met and nominated practically the same ticket. Kavanaugh, although at first defeated for nomination on this ticket, was subsequently given a place on it.

¹ *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1877.

² *Ibid.*, October 19, 1877.

But even before that had happened, he advised the workingmen "to vote for those men whom they desired and no others, no matter what ticket they were on."¹

Next, the Independent Greenbackers under the leadership of Cameron and McNally turned to support the Democrats,² while the National Workingmen's organization of Illinois, which had promised to remain non-partisan, fell out with the Republicans and nominated a ticket of its own. At the beginning its ticket was a hybrid affair, but as the election approached it became more and more Democratic, particularly as to the important offices.³

After these coalitions were effected came the disaffections. The Industrials, who were dissatisfied with the Democratic alliance, split away from the original Industrial party and organized an Industrial party of their own. The Greenbackers, who were dissatisfied with the indorsement their party gave to the Democrats, also split away and organized their own Greenback party. The rump elements then united under the name Industrial-Greenback party. But even they failed to remain true to greenback-laborism and placed at the head of their ticket for county treasurer David Hammond, who had bid for the Republican nomination but had lost out.⁴

The election was now about a week off, but matters were not finally settled. The different factions in the field began to exchange "favorite sons." The Industrials who had indorsed the Democrats now put some of the Industrial-Greenback candidates on their ticket.⁵ The National Workingmen's organization of Illinois, which originally was non-partisan and which later decided to run a ticket of its own, removed its candidate for school superintendent and indorsed the candidate whom the other parties had nominated, including the Democrats.⁶ Two or three days before

¹ *Chicago Tribune*, October 31, 1877.

² *Pomeroy's Democrat*, November 17, 1877; *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 27, 1877.

³ *Ibid.*, October 30, 31, November 2, 1877.

⁴ *Pomeroy's Democrat*, November 17, 1877.

⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, November 1, 1877.

⁶ *Ibid.*, November 2, 1877.

the election some of the candidates of the Industrial-Greenback party "quit." The executive committee wrangled on substitutes until the day before the election, with the result that ballots could not be printed in time. On election day 45 out of 85 precincts had no ballots.¹ When the votes were counted, the most favored candidate of the Industrial-Greenback party received 1,760 votes.

The balance of the story of this first attempt of labor in politics is not unlike the part already told. In the spring of 1878 all the factions rallied under the inspiration of a national convention of greenbackers and laboring men held at Toledo. But now M. M. (Brick) Pomeroy became a center of discord. He had gone to the Toledo convention opposed to the bond feature in the greenback scheme. He was defeated and as soon as he returned to Chicago started a repudiation movement.² In the fall of the same year McNally started a new party of his own. He is found at the head of an "executive committee of the genuine Greenback party."³ When he tried to nominate a Democrat for sheriff, his party split. The malcontents went over to the faction that originally swore allegiance to the Toledo convention. In the spring of 1879 Pomeroy's opposition of 1878 blossomed out in the Union Greenback Labor party; but now the Toledo faction dropped its independence and indorsed Carter H. Harrison, the Democratic nominee for mayor.

Meanwhile the resumption of specie payment occurred in January, 1879. That left the party without a cause. Business began to recover about the same time. That made the men look to their jobs. The "parties" wrangled awhile longer and finally disappeared.

IV

Business prosperity which began in 1879 began to decline in 1881, and 1882 again saw hard times. The workingmen who had busied themselves with shorter hours and higher wages in the interval turned to politics in 1882. In this year the Trades

¹ *Pomeroy's Democrat*, December 1, 1877.

² *Ibid.*, March 23, 30, 1878.

³ *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1878, p. 8, col. 4.

Assembly, the forerunner of the present Chicago Federation of Labor, ran its own legislative ticket under the name of the United Labor party.¹ But the real political manifestation of the year centered in the newly born Anti-Monopoly party.

The Anti-Monopoly party was really nothing more than the old Greenback party reshuffled and restacked to meet new conditions. The resumption of specie payment in 1879 left little hope for greenbackism. At the same time the monopoly movement was becoming more obvious. It had already passed through its pooling stage and was entering into its trustee or trust stage. The Standard Oil Company, it will be recalled, was organized in 1882 as a trusteeship. Meanwhile Henry George had published his book on *Progress and Poverty* in 1879. At the organizing convention of the party one delegate offered a resolution "declaring the land monopolist as the greatest enemy of the human race, and indorsing Henry George's scheme for the nationalization of land." Other issues which had grown in importance since the seventies were woman suffrage and prohibition.

All these and others found their way into the platform which, as finally drawn, called for the following: that the resources of life should become the property of the whole people, that the railroads and telegraphs be brought under national control, that the national government be the sole source of money "whether of paper, silver, or gold," that the monopoly of land be abolished, that all inventions worthy of adoption be purchased by the government "and given to the people," that the questions of prohibition and woman suffrage be submitted to a vote of the people, and finally, that labor be given a greater share of the attention of the legislature.²

The elements that composed the new party were more varied than the elements which composed the old. There were the greenbackers who were already split up between disgruntled old party politicians, intellectuals, and manual workers; there were the anti-monopolists, single taxers, prohibitionists, suffragists. Not opposed to these but in addition to them were a number of Knights of Labor.

¹ *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, September 18, 1882; *Chicago Tribune*, September 11, October 2, 1882.

² *Ibid.*, September 9, 26, 1882.

But these were not all. The socialists who a few years earlier campaigned under their own banner now supported the party. But they were divided among themselves on the basis of political and direct action, the sponsors of the latter becoming the anarchists of 1886 fame. They brought their differences into the party only to its damage.¹ Beyond the party lines was the further distracting influence of the Trades Assembly which, as already mentioned above, ran its own legislative ticket and refused to co-operate with the anti-monopolists even to the extent of indorsing those candidates for office for which it made no nominations.²

The campaign was not a particularly lively one. The only labor papers in the city were controlled by the radical socialists. These were the German *Arbeiter Zeitung*, *Vorbote*, and *Fackel*. The anti-monopolists and the trade unionists fought each other. The conservative and radical socialists within the party called each other names. As the campaign was drawing to a close, the prominent candidates of both the party and the Trades Assembly began to withdraw their names. Albert R. Parsons and Mark L. Crawford withdrew from the Trades Assembly ticket and George A. Schilling from the Anti-Monopoly ticket. The election returns gave the Anti-Monopoly candidates but a few hundred votes; the congressional candidate in the first district received some 500 votes. The legislative candidates of the Trades Assembly ran somewhat better; the candidate for the assembly in the fifth district received over 3,000 votes.³ That was the end of the Anti-Monopoly flutter.

V

It was the Haymarket bomb of May 4, 1886, that precipitated the political movement of this and the few following years. Up to this time Chicago was, so to speak, an industrial frontier town. Ever since the Civil War it had been growing at a feverish pace in industry, commerce, and population. Indeed, the growth was so

¹ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1882.

² *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, October 2, 1882; *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1882.

³ *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, November 9, 1882.

fast that capital and labor simply did not know how to behave in each other's presence. Instead of constituting some form of orderly relationship, capital organized a secret fund to exterminate labor, and labor organized a secret fraternity to exterminate capital. The kind of relationship existed that some of the younger cities of the far West have re-enacted since. When the bomb fell, labor as a whole was made to pay the penalty for the lives lost in the explosion. Those who were immediately connected with the preachments of violence, although it has never been proven in or out of court just who was responsible for the bomb, were seized and executed or imprisoned. Those who had no connection whatsoever with such preachments but who, on the contrary, had counselled moderation were nevertheless discredited in their relationship with their employers. In the midst of the propaganda of violence, the orderly labor elements had announced that after May 1, 1886, they would not work longer than an eight-hour day. The demand was so universal that as May 1 approached employers began to establish the eight-hour day in their shops; but after the bomb fell, only three days later, the employers began to return to the old hours. Labor felt that the tragedy of the bomb was laid at its door only to discredit it in its economic demands, and it turned to politics to save itself. By this act it brought into existence the most successful labor party that had ever appeared in Chicago. It elected eight legislators, one alderman, and in one mayoralty election forced the two old parties to combine.

Already in the heat of the trial a provisional committee met and issued a call for a conference of delegates to meet on August 21 "for the purpose of discussing the situation and taking such independent political action as our joint wisdom may dictate." Some 251 delegates responded to the call and organized "a federation for independent political action." Represented at the meeting were about 47 trade and labor organizations, 41 Knights of Labor assemblies, and an organization called the Peoples' Party Club.¹ Some time later the federation was christened the United Labor party and was purged of all but delegates from the Knights of

¹ *Proceedings* (manuscript), August 21, 1886.

Labor assemblies and trade unions.¹ It was thus made literally a labor party.

As between the trade unionists and Knights of Labor there was already room for differences of opinion; but within this dichotomy there were many more differences that were much more petulant. There were anarchists, socialists, single-taxers, reformists, old-time Republicans and Democrats. At the very first nominating convention these differences showed themselves in a split between those who wanted independent political action and those who wanted to dicker with the old parties. The alignment was anarchists, socialists, single-taxers, reformists on one side, and Republican and Democratic workingmen on the other. The split came on a vote for a temporary chairman. The radicals supported Charles G. Dixon, and the conservatives M. B. McAbee, an old Democrat and trade unionist. The radicals won out and quickly adjourned the meeting in the midst of an effort on the part of the conservatives to pack the hall with additional delegates. The radicals then met by themselves and read the conservatives out of the party.

The conservatives, too, met by themselves and organized the Cook County Labor party. They drew their chief support from Cigar Makers' Union No. 14, Typographical Union No. 16, Bricklayers' and Stonemasons' unions, Stonecutters' unions, stationary engineers, hod carriers, pressed-brick and terra-cotta setters. They nominated a ticket made up of Democrats, Republicans, and some independents. John M. Dunphy was placed at the head of the county ticket for sheriff. He was a Democrat, had served one term as West Town collector, one term as city treasurer, and recently failed to get the Democratic nomination for sheriff which he sought.²

Cleansed of old party adherents, the United Labor party adopted a platform according to its own choice and nominated an independent state and county ticket made up, with but few

¹ *Minutes of Committee of Twenty-one* (manuscript), August 21, 1886.

² *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1886.

exceptions, of workingmen. Its judicial candidates it chose from the nominees of the two old parties, not having men trained to fill those positions in its own ranks. The platform it adopted excoriated the affiliation of the Democratic and Republican parties with wealth and declared that labor must organize "into defensive political organizations" as it has been organized into defensive producers' organizations. On specific points the platform was divided into national demands, state demands, and county demands. The national demands were: an eight-hour day for all government employees and the employees of special-privilege corporations, government ownership of all means of communication, an anti-contract labor law, a national monetary system, tax reform, the forfeiture of all unearned land grants, restrictions upon the ownership of land, and the reservation of all public lands for actual settlers, election days to be holidays, no increase of the army in time of peace, and the abolition of private police such as the Pinkertons. The state platform indorsed an amendment to the Constitution looking to the abolition of contract convict labor, indorsed an eight-hour day for public employees and employees of corporations enjoying any special privileges, favored weekly payment of wages, abolition of child labor under fifteen years and compulsory education for children between six and fourteen years, popular election of school boards making women eligible, free school supplies, and an employers' liability law. The county platform, in addition to reforms in the machinery of the county government, demanded state insurance and the taxation of "all lands held for speculative purposes . . . equally with cultivated lands."¹

The form of organization adopted for the party was that of federation between the trade unions and the Knights of Labor assemblies which declared themselves for politics. But the trade unionists at this time had two central bodies, one conservative and the other radical. The Trades Assembly was the organization for the former and the Central Labor Union for the latter. The Knights of Labor assemblies also had two district assemblies, one

¹ *Proceedings* of the convention (manuscript), September 27, 1886.

conservative and the other radical. District Assembly No. 24 was the organization for the former, District Assembly No. 57 for the latter. While the locals elected the delegates to the city central, the membership on the executive committee of the party was divided in such a way as to give each of these four bodies equal representation thereon, the city central itself electing the odd man. Ward clubs were authorized, but these had a precarious existence. Workers alone could organize a club. After organization they had to have at least a majority of workers. At first they could not send delegates to the central body but could recommend candidates for nomination. Later the privilege of recommending was taken away from them. When the party began to decline, representation was extended to them.

At the polls the party scored a victory. It cast 24,845 votes, elected seven members to the assembly and one to the senate at Springfield, elected five judges out of the six that it indorsed, and fell short of electing a congressman by 64 votes. Moreover, it helped to defeat the Democratic party and helped turn the county over the Republicans. This is the biggest victory labor has ever won in Chicago.

But the victory was not altogether an unmixed joy. Indeed, it contained within itself the elements of final defeat and disintegration. After the election was over, and in preparation for the one to come in the spring of 1887, the old parties stiffened their opposition. They also became more meddlesome than before in the affairs of the party. The Democrats won over William Gleason, a member of the executive committee of the party, to the idea of fusion and for his services subsequently rewarded him with a clerkship in the election commissioners' office.¹ It should also be recalled that the party was conceived in the hope of vindicating labor of any connection with the Haymarket bomb; but it was this very thing that the old parties now capitalized to their own advantage. A vote for them was a vote for law and order and the American flag; a vote for labor was a vote for anarchy and the red flag. To make success doubly certain they united on one candidate

¹ *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, January 30, 1888.

for mayor. In the election, of 75,000 votes cast, the laborites drew some 23,500 and elected but one alderman in the fifth ward.¹

The vote was a great disappointment to the workers. The different factions began to lay the defeat at one another's door. "Had Dixon been the candidate," said the Knights of Labor, speaking for the conservatives, "had Morgan not run the convention and campaign; had Currilin not been put on the stump, there would have been 40,000 votes instead of 23,000."² Meanwhile William Gleason who had been conniving with the Democrats, organized a party of his own, and, what is more important, appropriated the name of the old party through a state charter. In the fall of 1887, his party, popularly known as the Free Lunch party, indorsed the Democrats. The old party, disheartened and confused in the public mind, polled only about 7,000 votes. After the election, to distinguish itself from the other, it adopted the name of Radical Labor party.

Meanwhile a third party appeared on the horizon to make worse things already bad. This was the Union Labor party organized early in 1887 in Cincinnati which was really nothing more nor less than the ghost of the old Greenback party come to earth. It had a national ambition and proceeded to organize, among other cities, Chicago. At first the Chicago workers balked. It was not radical enough for them. "The platform," said the *Chicago Labor Enquirer* " . . . is good as far as it goes . . . but to enlist the wage-workers . . . in an independent political movement, a platform must be broad, deep, and radical." That was early in 1887. But after the poor showing of the fall election in the same year and in the face of the approaching national election in 1888, the workers began to view it more and more favorably. Being organized on a national scale, it was better fitted for the exigencies of a national campaign than a purely local organization. The *Labor Enquirer*, which first opposed it, and the *Knights of Labor* now turned their columns to its support, and District Assembly No. 24 of the Knights of Labor likewise voted its aid.³ Finally

¹ *The Knights of Labor*, April 9, 1887.

² April 9, 1887; Morgan was the leader of the socialists, Currilin of the anarchists.

³ *The Knights of Labor*, August 18, 1888.

the Radical Labor party itself went over to it. The Union party entered the fall election with a national, state, and local ticket, but drew only about 2,180 votes.

This result dampened the hopes of those workers who had taken new courage in the possibilities of the national party. It was a disappointment to them and led to their withdrawal from politics. Thus the labor parties set in motion in 1886 volatilized in a two-year period. The first to go were the conservative trade unionists under the name of the Cook County Labor party. The next were the Free Lunchers, less conservative and probably less sincere than the first. The next a shade less conservative than the first two, went up with the Union Labor party. The only ones that remained were the socialists, and they campaigned under their own banner in 1889. The single taxers and anarchists were lost somewhere between the beginning and the end.

VI

The labor politics of 1893 were an irradiation of the discontent that followed the panic of that year. The People's party, launched in 1891, maneuvered for the labor vote in the presidential election of 1892, but its candidate received some 1,214 votes in Cook County out of 249,000 votes cast. The times were still too good for politics. But after the panic descended and the Pullman strike came to pass with its injunctions, United States troops, and the imprisonment of the strike leaders, labor changed its mind and joined the Populists.

At its very first convention after the panic, the Illinois State Federation of Labor avowed a new faith in politics and instructed its executive board to call within the next six months a conference of representatives of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, the Farmers' Alliance, Knights of Labor, "and such other industrial bodies as may be deemed essential." "The repeated deception" it further declared, "of the laboring people by the Republican and Democratic parties emphasizes the necessity for independent political action on the part of the producers, and we declare that the reform necessary to a successful solution of the labor problem can only be attained by entering the political arena with the firm

determination to obtain administrative supremacy through the ballot box.”¹ The committee called a convention for July, 1894, at Springfield, but when the Populists saw that, they invited the workers to come to their convention called for May at the same place. The workers responded by sending a delegation from Chicago headed by Thomas J. Morgan. Morgan was a socialist-trade unionist who had from time to time challenged Samuel Gompers’s position in the American Federation of Labor. In 1893 he submitted to the convention of the American Federation of Labor a program calling, among other things, for the collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution. The program was submitted to a referendum vote and was in 1894 being debated all over the country. This program Morgan submitted to the Populists. A preliminary conference recommended it for adoption *in toto*, but the convention itself adopted all except the plank calling for collective ownership of the means of production, otherwise known as “plank 10.” Morgan went home disgruntled and the *Arbeiter Zeitung* lamented the outcome. It thought “plank 10” was the only reason for an independent party.

The Illinois State Federation of Labor then proceeded with its convention. The Chicago delegation came multicolored; there were in it Republican and Democratic politicians, Populists, single-taxers, trade unionists, Knights of Labor, socialists, anarchists. “Plank 10” was the center of the struggle from the beginning. The conservatives were on one side, the radicals on the other. At first the debate was free to all, then two teams were appointed to debate it in orderly fashion. When the vote was finally called, the plank was defeated by 59 against 49 votes. For the sake of harmony, however, a sugar-coated edition of “plank 10” was adopted chiefly through the instrumentality of Henry D. Lloyd. It read as follows: “We recommend those we represent in this conference to vote for those candidates of the People’s party at the coming election who will pledge themselves to the principles of the collective ownership by the people of all such means of production and distribution *as the people elect* to operate for the

¹ *Proceedings*, eleventh annual session, Galesburg, 1893, pp. 21, 42; *Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung*, November 17, 1893.

commonwealth." The platform settled, the convention indorsed the Populist candidates for state offices. That was virtual fusion with the People's party.¹

When the difficulties were settled in the state, they began to form in the city, this time between those who favored old party politics and those who favored new party politics. In August a county nominating convention met with some 900 members made up in the following way: the American Railway Union which conducted the Pullman strike, with 189 delegates, the People's party with 130, the Knights of Labor with 58, the Socialist Labor party with 130, single-taxers with 10, Turner societies with 9, and the trade unionists with the balance. When nominations for chairman were called, the radicals nominated Charles G. Dixon, and the conservatives J. J. Ryan, at one time president of the Building Trade Council. The hall became a pandemonium. The corridor contingent of the convention pressed against the locked doors and broke in. The Ryan supporters were shouting "Trade Unionists *versus* Populists." The Dixon supporters were shouting their own watchwords. Finally the convention broke up, with each faction claiming the name of the party. The Ryan faction then turned Democratic with some exceptions, and the Dixon faction remained Populist. As such, the Dixon faction cast some 31,000 votes in Cook County but elected no one.

After the election the first defection occurred in the departure of the socialists. Thus far, as appears from the representation at the nominating convention, the party was a federation made up of elements separately organized. After the election an attempt was made to amalgamate all these elements into locals which should receive their charters from the party itself. The socialists objected; it would destroy their organization. Moreover, they began to view the People's party as a party of small merchants and small farmers "who beginning to feel their impending doom . . . ask the workingman to assist them in patching up our present capitalistic system."² They withdrew.

¹ *Eight-Hour Herald*, July 10, 1894.

² *The People* (New York), April 7, 1895.

Partly crippled, the party entered the mayoralty campaign in the spring election of 1895, but it drew about half the votes now that it drew in the previous election. That discouraged some of the elements that still clung to the party in the hope that it would become "the party of the American workingmen." What was left joined the Democrats in an effort to elect Bryan president of the United States in 1896.

VII

Both the opponents and advocates of labor politics can draw comfort from the above facts. The opponents can point to the brief and stormy existence of each party as it came and departed. The advocates can point to the planks which originated with those parties, but which have since been "stolen" by others. But, partisan perspicacity aside, why were the parties so short-lived?

Labor politics thus far have been wholly palliative. Only at the end of a series of strikes aimed to keep wages abreast of rising prices has labor gone into politics. The masses did not go into it until depression came, and went out of it as soon as time brought relief. Under such conditions parties could not thrive. Each disavowal of politics made the next avowal so much the harder. Even after it had been again solemnly resolved that labor had to organize on the political as well as on the economic side, it was then difficult to put content into the resolution. There was no organization; there was no "glorious past." There were no "leaders," spell-binders, ward-healers, "captains," with which to man an organization. Conventions split as soon as the gavel fell. Family fights were conducted in the gaze of all, only to repel into old-line respectability the unwary, who are never allowed to see the struggles that go on in the old-established parties. In the absence of solid organization the old parties had a chance to "play" the new to death. They played one faction against the other and lured away whatever leadership manifested itself.

The socialists were the only ones that brought organization and leadership to the labor parties. But they brought the kind they had in their own organization and those were not altogether suited for getting votes. The leaders knew Marxian socialism and

they talked Marxian socialism in campaigns in which local issues were to be decided. The organization they brought was of the lodge-pattern variety in which the unit of organization was the club. The club was organized, not on the basis of the political geography of the city, but on the basis of nationality. When a labor party was organized, trade unions, Knights of Labor assemblies, single-tax organizations, and Turner societies were simply treated as clubs who, together with the socialist clubs, sent delegates to a city central body which was the party. But as each union, each Knights of Labor assembly, each single-tax organization, and each Turner society was organized, not along ward lines, but according to its own particular interest, each was politically impotent just as each socialist club organized on a basis of nationality had been politically impotent.

But if this form of organization was unfit for politics, it was fatal in still another way. Only a catastrophe such as occurred in 1877 and 1886, and the depression and unemployment which accompanied these and the other political manifestations, were strong enough to overcome the differences of the elements that united in these parties. But under the club form of organization the differences were allowed to persist. Each element worked out its own solution of the world's problems to the exclusion of all other possible solutions behind its own doors. When they met in conventions each tried to foist its own solution upon the others, with the results indicated above.

EDWARD B. MITTELMAN

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO